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THE

REVENGE OF THE FOUR

By Josiah Flynt & Francis Walton

ONE evening, or rather one morning, in May, 189—, in the "Slide," which everybody knows, though that it not its name, a mixed company of men and women were glad that they were young. Therefore, they ordered miscellaneous drinks and smoked cigarettes and listened to three "darkies" explain, to the accompaniment of three guitars, that they find the Western Union a convenience, no matter where they roam, and that they will telegraph their baby, who'll send ten or twenty maybe, and they won't have to walk back home.

In marked contrast with the other visitors that evening at the "Slide," there sat close about a table, in earnest consultation, four celebrities, whom the "house" treated with distinguished deference.

This May evening in the "Slide" they had met by appointment in the way of business. Their business for the moment seemed to consist in the attentive contemplation of a calendar of local shows and festivals and generally of occasions on which anywhere in the United States in the next three months extraordinary crowds would congregate. At any expense of labor or inconvenience to themselves they were ambitious to afford their services to the greatest number of people in the greatest number of places, in the shortest space of time possible. The question of the day was, in which part of the country and with what "graft" the benefit of their services should first be offered.

Mr. Eady, called "Mike" among his intimates, and "Tier 4, No. 30,896," among his attendants at a mansion of more than monastic seclusion, facetiously known as his "lying-in" hospital, favored a preliminary jaunt to a reunion of civil war veterans to be held in the south. He backed up the suggestion with promises of success, which, on account of his experience and age—he had just passed his fifty-sixth year—were listened to with marked attention.

"There's more suckers in a day down in that part of the country," he declared, "than there is up here in a week. We've all been in the hill country in West Virginia on circus day, ain't we? Well, the class o' people you find there are runnin' loose all over the south. They take in 'bout one show a season, an' when they get to town they rubber so they ain't thinkin' 'bout their leathers at all. W'y, I've seen those yaps come to town an' throw up their hands at sights that a Bowery kid wouldn't drop a cigarette snipe to see. Put 'em in front of a side show's banners an' they'll screw their necks till you'd think they was never goin' to get 'em in shape again. They work like steers on their farms an' don't see enthin' excitin' more'n once or twice a year, an' when a big thing comes along it staggers 'em. The same class o' yaps is goin' to be at the reunion.

"I can see jus' exactly how the thing's goin' to be. Those old soldiers, you know, 'll come in from the country an' rubber themselves silly. They'll chew the rag right in a crowd, blockin' up the way an' makin' pushes so's a bloke won't need any stalls. Colonel Jim-Jams from Kentucky 'll see Captain Coffee Cooler from New Orleans, an' they'll beller an' holler, an' han' round plug tobacco an' fine-cut right in a big jam, an' Jim-Jams 'll suggest a mint julep. Then they'll push an' squeeze to get out o' the crowd, an' off comes the touch.

"You know the single-handed worker, Sneezy Johnson? Well, he told me not more'n six weeks ago that jus' such yaps as Jim-Jams an' Coffee-Cooler stalled for 'im at a gatherin' in South Carolina better'n a trained push. 'W'y, Mike,' he says, 'I don't want nothin' easier'n gettin' those people to bite. They're jus' like sheep. Let somebody holler that the elephants is comin' an' they crowd an' shove 's if they was bughouse. I was amongst 'em when Bryan struck Atlanta, an' it's God's truth, my hands actually got tired weddin' the leathers I pulled up.' Now, I tell you, blokes, we don't want to lose a chance like the reunion 'less there's somethin' a damn sight better somewhere else. It won't cost us over ten days to take it in, an' then we can jump west, or where you like."

"You're all right 'bout the yaps bitin', Mike," remarked Mr. Burras, familiarly known as "Larry," "but there's goin' to be an all-fired big push o' guns at that reunion, an' you know how those yaps are. They take the bait like catfish; but look out when the hollerin' begins. W'y they nearly lynched Jerry Simpson and the Michigan Kid in a jerk town in Georgia last winter. They two was hittin' it up pretty lively, and an old Hoosier woke up out o' one of his dreams while the Kid's first was in his pocket, an' he went bellowin' like a moose all over the shop. If the coppers hadn't jumped in and rescued the Kid the yaps 'ud 'a' croaked 'im, sure, an' it cost his push a thousand plunks to spring him from the coppers.

"There's goin' to be a big push o' visitin' coppers at the reunion, too, an' if any of 'em knows us they'll beef, dead sure, 'less we square 'em, an' they'll beef anyhow if the guns go it too strong, an' that's jus' what's goin' to happen. There'll be such a lot o' suckers that the guns'll work 'em hard, an' there'll have to be a lot of springin' done. My advice is—'course, if they ain't nothin' better—that we take in the through rattlers on the Pennsy or the Central for the next few weeks an' go it sort 'o quiet like till we see how things are pannin' out. Them passengers on the through rattlers are always good for twenty-five or fifty, an' we can give 'em the change an' raise rackets. At night we can pull off some Pullman touches. I ain't stuck on this kind o' graftin', but it's my opinion that it'll suit us better'n the reunion will at this stage o' the game."

Mr. Renn, with the description of "Monkey Shorty," agreed with Mr. Burras that the reunion was impracticable, but for reasons which the others understood but did not seriously consider, favored remaining in town and taking in such events as funerals until the season was more advanced. "Goin' to be some big stiffs to work at this month," he remarked, appreciatively, "an' if we don't attend to 'em somebody else will; take my tip for that." Mr. Renn was engaged to be married to a sweet little thing on the East Side, and, as his companions well knew, was also competent to make acceptable suggestions.

Mr. Frood, affectionately termed "Eddie" by an indulgent wife as well as by his three pals, proposed a jaunt through the great state of Ohio, and made good his reason for the selection of this locality with very convincing arguments and illustrations.

"There's no use talkin', blokes," he said, "there ain't been no improvements on old Ohio in any state o' the Union. She's been touched up right an' left, backward an' forward, an' sideways an' crossways, an' there she sits still, sayin', 'Gimme some more, honey; gimme some more.' W'y, blokes, it's one o' the phenomenons o' the age, as Jimmy the Greek used to say, the way Ohio has been ripped open by politicians an' guns an' keeps as chipper as ever. W'y, them railroad junctions o' hers has been touched up for the last twenty-five years, an' they're as good as government bonds yet. Better, by Jove! I don't want any neater graft than floatin' 'round them junctions. An' I'd like to know where there's another state where you can fix things the way you can in Ohio. The politicians have got the state by the throught, an' you know as well as I do that where they get their graft in guns can too.

"Now's the time when the circuses begin their rounds, an' the thing for us to do is to jump over there, tie up with one o' the shows an' jus' take its dates. I was over there last season with Myers an' Randall, an' we only had to make one spring, an' that didn't cost us over six hundred. By August we had six thousand plunks—even money—banked. We can't do any better'n that anywhere, an' I say that we hunt up a good sneak an' climber (sneak thief and burgler) an' jump over there."

"Do you know what fixers are travelin' with the shows?" asked Mr. Eady.

"There ain't been any changes. I saw Cincinnati Red day before yesterday an' he said the shows had the same coppers. Some of 'em has come up a little in their commission charges, but most of 'em are askin' 20 per cent, same as usual. Fifteen per cent goes with some of 'em if you ain't on the dip an' are jus' doin' the square thing act."

This conversation took place in the inscrutable lipless enunciation of the profession. The night festival in the "Slide" was still at its height, and above all the sound of light laughter, of popping corks and shuffling feet, the voices of the three "darkies" proclaimed, to the accompaniment of the three guitars, that they had got a horseless carriage an' a footman, too, and yellow coachmen by the score; that they'd said good-bye to all the coons, 'cause we ain't poor no more.

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Adolph Hochheimer, mayor at this time of the city of Cornville, was a politician of the school whose principle is to let the people have whatever they want, provided always they want it badly enough to make a fuss about it.

As chief executive of the city of Cornville he had succeeded an incumbent who had been the candidate of a reform party. Mayor Hochheimer was elected as the "regular" candidate, to the open rejoicing of almost every one and to the concealed rejoicing of almost every one else. Every one found it possible to get his little bill "jobbed," and the new executive, out of whom hitherto, as a man of business, politics had made money, began to reap the harvest of his long studies, and with perfect mastery made money out of politics.

On the morning that the "Great and Only Combination Circus and Menagerie" was getting ready for the afternoon entertainment in the city of Cornville a gentleman, in the full-jeweled regimentals of a sport, but with a badge on his waistcoat which proclaimed him to be a private detective, called at the mayor's office in the town hall and asked for an interview with "His Honorable Mr. Hochheimer." The interview was granted.

"Good morning, Mr. Hochheimer. This is a pleasant day."

"Very pleasant, sir; very pleasant. Take a seat, sir. Don't know as I ever saw a pleasanter at jest this season of the year."

The two men made mental notes upon each other while these original courtesies were being exchanged.

"I am the special officer, Mr. Hochheimer, of the 'Great and Only Combination Circus and Menagerie,' which is to show here this afternoon and evening, and I have taken the liberty of presenting complimentary tickets to your chief of police and am here now to offer some to you. We should be very glad if you would make use of the half-dozen in this envelope. We shall feel honored if you can find the time to visit the entertainments in person."

"Very kind, sir; very kind. I judge from the posters about town that you have a very attractive show."

"Yes; we offer the public a varied programme. I think I may say varied, sir."

It is strictly to be noted that this exchange of commonplace was not ineptitude; in the language of the prize ring, it was sparring for an opening.

The mayor, who was approached in this manner on an average of twice a week, was perfectly aware that the circus representative's business was not yet transacted. He leaned back in his chair in an attitude of expectation.

"Mr. Hochheimer," the detective continued at last, "besides being the special officer of the circus company, I am also the business representative of some of the 'side-show' concerns connected with the circus."

"Jest so," said the mayor.

"Exactly," said the detective.

Whereupon both men looked a shade more thoughtful.

"Among the 'side-show' interests which I represent are some amusing games, which we are taking along with us this summer. We try to have novelties every year, you know."

"Jest so," said the mayor.

"They are harmless little games of chance, you know, at which the visitor of the show may take in twenty times his money or maybe fifty times," said the detective, who labored to be accurate. "We run the games, you know, more to draw a crowd before the circus than anything else; it isn't at all our notion to make money out of the games—except just to pay expenses; they're, so to speak, a kind of advertisement. We thought," concluded the detective, with childlike simplicity, "that we ought to explain this to you beforehand."

"What is the nature of these games?" asked the mayor, also with childlike simplicity.

"Well, one is a variation of the old shell game, that as a boy you doubtless yourself became acquainted with. Then we are experimenting with a little wheel and a pea that we have been led to believe might entertain the boys. The pea goes skipping around, you know, and if it stops at the right place, the boy wins."

Here there was a really impressive pause. The mayor's face had become of a portentous gravity; he cleared his throat as if preparatory to the declaration of a moral principle.

"There are two other matters in regard to which I need trespass upon your attention," said the astute middleman, who did not conceive it possible the mayor could at that moment have anything to say that would be of profit to his employers. "It is the wish of the gentlemen who are handling the little games of which I speak to testify their gratitude to your charming town for the hospitality it showed them the last time they were here."

This certainly demonstrated a Christian spirit on the part of two at least of his employers. The hospitality to which they had been treated on their last visit to Cornville had consisted mainly in a new and perfectly snug suit of tar and feathers.

"They wish to distribute—a—$500 among your private charities, and would regard it as a great favor if you, Mr. Hochheimer, who can apply the money with so much more discretion than is at all possible to us outsiders, would take charge of the funds."

Here he produced a neat package, which he laid on the desk before the mayor. The mayor's face assumed a look of extreme abstraction.

"The other little matter relates only to the subject of police protection. It is the policy of the 'Great and Only' to rely largely upon the local police for protection, paying liberally, of course, for the extra service they request. They find this policy more—more satisfactory to every one. I am about to speak to your chief of police on the subject, but thought it more courteous first to address you; particularly as it seems much simpler to make one arrangement for the protection of the grounds as a whole—the main show, the side shows, and—well—all the little booths that are set up along with the main shows."

"Has the show taken out its license?" asked the mayor, with the politeness of a man who can take in an idea without having his skull cracked to make room for it.

"The license? Oh, yes, Mr. Mayor, the license is all right."

"I will consider the matters of which you speak with the chief of police," said the mayor, with the grand air. The chief of police was the commander of fifteen patrolmen and one wagon.

"It is a pleasure to meet a gentleman who has had experience of affairs," said the polite middleman, rising to take his leave. "I was happy to see that you were put in office by a majority which promises a re-election."

"Hope your show will have good success," said the mayor. "Hope you will have fair weather."

"To-day, at all events, is a pleasant day," said the detective.

"Very pleasant, sir, very pleasant; don't know that I ever saw a pleasanter at jest this season of the year."

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There was still an hour to while away before the afternoon entertainment in the big tent of the "Great and Only Combination Circus and Menagerie" would begin. The parade had taken place in the morning, and the visitors to the show were gathering on the grounds. Since early morning they had packed the highways that converge at Cornville as the spokes of a wheel converge at the hub.

It is only once a year that the "Great and Only" visits Cornville. The "yaps," as Mr. Eady had called them, or if you prefer, the "backbone and intelligence of a great nation," as the president had assured them he felt them to be, had passed a private resolution that for the time being their line fences could be "gol darned," they were going to take a day off.

The four celebrities were present to lend the charm of surprise to the day off. Mr. Renn, who, on account of the "sweet little thing" on the East Side, had favored remaining at home and "workin' the stiffs," was playing his part behind the counter of a little booth to which he allured the backbone and intelligence of a great nation with cries of "Sixteen to one, gentlemen; sixteen gold plunks for one—if you choose the right color. It's a mere charity I'm offerin' you, jus' to advertise the clown in the show. Sixteen to one—beats Brayn hollow; step, gentlemen, an' try your luck—sixteen to one!"

The "sweet little thing" on Second avenue would never have recognized her beloved "Shorty" in the earnest exhorter beseeching the crowd to "take a spin on his wheel," which was the wheel of fortune. There was a fervor in his speech, and an intense look in his face, that, it is to be feared, the "sweet little thing" had never been favored with. The Under World makes love more or less, as does the Upper World; like the Upper World, also, it becomes really in earnest when it makes money.

"Dod gast that squirt of a wheel, anyhow! Soy, you, behind there, when am I goin' to win? You got five o' my dollars, an' I ain't won onc't."

The words were deceiving and unnatural, but Mr. Eady's voice was the same in Ohio as in the "Slide." He was a better "tool" than "stall," as the Upper World knew to its sorrow, but "tools" have no function in sure-thing games, and he was doing his best to make the people "bite."

"Roll 'er again. I'll chance another; make or break; win or bust. The old woman 'll dress me down, but shucks! hard words don't lower the price o' eggs."

The wheel began to slacken its pace for the sixth time; the little pea lingered exasperatingly near the blanks; Mr. Renn made a slight movement with his foot; the pea moved slowly toward the winning colors. The wheel stopped.

"Here's your money, sir. See if it's right before you leave: ten fives an' three tens. Make room for the best. Sixteen to one, gentlemen—if you choose the right colors. A mere charity I'm offerin' you, jus' to advertise the show. Step up, gentlemen; don't let the grass grow on your luck. Circus day comes but once a year. Don't push there. Take you time. Time's the only thing cheaper'n circus lemonade. The big tent don't open for an hour yet. Easy there, I tell you! You two fellows there in front stop your shovin'!"

Mr. Burras and Mr. Frood were leading the innocents to the slaughter. The innocents could hardly wait to be led; they jostled Mr. Eady aside before he could count his winnings, and fortune's wheel had made a number of turns by the time he broke through the surging mob and made his way to the rear to spur on those who still held back. It was a "hot time," such as the four celebrities had prayed for. "The Hoosier pineth for eddication," Mr. Eady said, and the Hoosier got it. The three "stalls" had to turn policemen and keep the crowd back, it was so eager to learn by experience. Dollars, in silver and paper, were thrust into Mr. Renn's hands with a rapidity which at times came very near making him forget to halt the pea at the losing colors. There was grumbling among the losers, but fatuity is infinite and inexhaustible in the ranks behind the first, and the people in the rear elbowed those in front of them aside in their haste to benefit the eloquent Renn. Sixteen in exchange for one, and every man convinced beforehand of his natural and inalienable luck! Cornville did not come to its senses till a few minutes began.

Then there were remarks more militant than consoling. "Mob 'em!" cried one indignant citizen, who had sowed dollars and reaped wisdom and scorned it. The life of a celebrity is hard. There were even numbers of the crowd who suggested tar and feathers. But they reckoned without the Powers That Rule.

"Clear the way, here," commanded the chief of police, at the head of an imposing squad sworn in for the day. "No crowding." The chief received 10 per cent of the net proceeds.

"But, chief, we've been done," protested a bucolic chorus.

"Get out, you milkskins; go in an' see the show!" And the chief whisked them aside.

"But, Shief," screamed a little German, "I vant mein money back. I loose two dollar. Dose fellows is slickers. I vant to tell you."

"Choke it off, Dutchy; you're excited. Take a run around the ring with the baby elephant."

"Bei Gott, I vill do noddings of de kint. I go straight to de mayor. Vill some off you beeples go mit me?"

The entertainment had begun, and the "beeples" were there to see it; but ten who had lost heavily agreed to accompany the German to the mayor's office. They were not influential or prominent, but the majorty of them were voters, and the mayor was amenable to reason when reason took the form of applied mathematics.

"Do you mean to say that they are running skin games—gambling—on the show grounds?" asked the initiated mayor.

"Bei Gott, dat's vat I tell you. Von man, he tell me I get seventy dollar for two. Dot is a lie. Also I lose mein two dollar. Ven beeples lose money, dot is gampling, in Chermanny, in Amerika, bei Gott, eferywhere."

"Gentlemen, you surprise me. I will see that those games are stopped immediately. I am glad you called my attention to the matter. I have to thank you in the name of the city of Cornville. Good afternoon, gentlemen. It is upon such public-spirited citizens as you that every official who is interested in good government must depend!"

The afternoon entertainment of the "Great and Only" was drawing to its close. The chariots were tearing around the big ring on the last lap; the spectators were getting ready to leave, and the performers for the "concert" after the "show" were peeking through the curtains of their dressing rooms to see how many had been persuaded to wait for them to do their "stunts." The four celebrities and the gentleman in the full-jeweled regimentals of a sport—the "special officer" of the "Great and Only"—were in solemn conclave just outside the main entrance.

"The chief says the mayor has ordered the games shut down," said the special officer. "Told me to tell you he'd have to make a pinch if you give the wheel another turn. It's all off."

"But we ain't even got our fixin' money back yet," objected Mr. Burras. "We'll be losers if we have to quit now." He threw an accent of really moral indignation into the word losers.

"Losers in a pig's eye!" exclaimed Mr. Frood. "If you'll stand for the dip"—and he gave the special officer a dig in the ribs with his thumb—"we'll get our dough back ten times over. How much commission have you got to have?"

"Seein' how things is runnin' I can't risk it under 25 per cent."

"Will you square the hollers?"

"If they don't holler too loud."

"Done!"

It was the crowd that was "done." Mr. Eady graciously consented to resume his old role of "tool," and the other three hummed the tune of the pickpocket's song:

Oh, we are three stalls,
Three jolly old stalls,
We live like royal Turks;
We're on the dip to win our chuck—
To hell with the man that works!

The band began to play, the flap of the main entrance to the big tent was thrown open, the crowd rushed out, and the four celebrities started "to do business."

So long as Cornville lasts and remeniscenes are permissible the story of the business that the four did will be told and retold. It was a revenge which has become classic, even in blase gun circles. As Mr. Frood graphically put it, "The crowd was simply ripped open." When it had dispersed and men went over the grounds to clean up for the rush and departure of the evening, the "weeded leathers" filled to overflowing a bushel basket. The Cornville public prints of the next day's issue estimated that $3,000 changed hands during the short space of time that the four were active. There was "beefing" galore, but the "Great and Only" folded its tent and stole away in the night, and the special officer squared no "hollers."

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The life in the "Slide" was at its height. The three "darkies" were strumming their guitars and vociferating in chorus. The room was full of smoke, the patrolman of the "beat" was getting his "eye-opener" at the back door, and the Salvation Army lassie in full uniform was ostentatiously vending her tracts. The four celebrities sat at their favorite table, drinking champagne. There had been toasts to Cornville, to Mayor Hochheimer, to the "Great and Only," and to the crowd, and Mr. Frood rose to reply to "Ohio."

"The dear old state"—and he struck the Fourth of July orator's attitude—"may she keep her junctions open, cherish her fixers, never go back on guns, an' breed a fresh crop o' suckers every year! Drink it down!"

Chorus: "Drink it down!"

And the three "darkies" struck into the chorus:

Get your money's worth, I've had ma gin an' feel mighty glad;
Get your money's worth, an' have a good time, but don't get bad;
Get your money's worth, dance yourself clean off the earth;
If you want to have fun
Bring your razor an' your gun
An' get your money's worth!

SIXTEEN TO ONE AND EVERY MAN CONVINCED BEFOREHAND OF HIS NATURAL AND INALIENABLE LUCK.

IN THE LITERARY WORLD

THE centenary of Emerson, which occurs on the 25th of this month, is an event of such importance in the literary world that one is led to wonder why more preparation is not being made for its observance and why more publishers, through their various periodicals, have not devoted considerable space to that great and good man who did so much for the uplifting of American letters throughout his life. One circumstance is, indeed worthy of particular note. A complete edition of Emerson is to be issued on the centenary day, an edition which shall include everything that Emerson wished to have published and in exactly the form and language which he chose to represent him. It seems unavoidable in these days of many editions to make a perfect collection of an author's writings. Either the publishers themselves decide that some things had better be omitted or the ambitious editor makes changes in the copy. It is fortunate that, in the case of Emerson, specific directions were left before his death as to the manner in which he wished his works to appear, and, now, for what is probably the first time, the edition will be both complete and entirely Emersonian.

Mr. F. B. Sanborn, who, with Channing, Thoreau and Alcott, knew Emerson most intimately for nearly thirty years and associated with him daily in his Concord home, relates a story of Emerson which touches a side of him as a poet which no one had hitherto remarked.

"This sense of rhythm or time in music," writes Mr. Sanborn, "he had perfectly; when he transgressed it was from purposed disregard thereof; but of tune in music he had none or the very faintest conception. He shared this defect with many eminent poets, but his young friends, Thoreau and Ellery Channing, had the musical ear, and therefore have occasionally surpassed Emerson in the harmonies of verse. When they did so he was not always aware of the fact, from this very defect. Of that, however, he was fully aware and used to tell a story against himself on the subject. He said that, when he went with other lads, to be taught vocal music by a blind vocalist, and they were all requested to 'sound'—that is, to run up and down the scale a little with their voices—the blind man said, when he heard Emerson's ineffectual notes: 'That boy need not come again; he cannot learn to sing.'"

The other day one of the leading New York "yellow" newspapers decided to secure a story of New York for a daily serial and, as one of the editors had dipped into E. W. Townsend's "Lees and Leaven," recently brought out in book form, he was directed to secure the right from the publishers. The publishers arranged with Mr. Townsend for the use of the story in this manner, but, meantime, the "yellow" paper's editor had found time to finish the story.

"We're awfuly sorry," he telephoned to the publisher, "but when we finished the story we found that Townsend had painted too accurate a picture of us in the latter part, and we'll have to give up the idea of using the story."

It was an unconscious bit of praise for Mr. Townsend's book that, because he had shown up "yellow" journalism so keenly, a self-confessed yellow newspaper did not dare publish it, although they were anxious to have it. When Mr. Townsend heard of the curious decision, he chuckled and said:

"I hardly thought they would be able to do it, but I thought they might have the nerve to run the story and, when they came to the yellow journalism part, to illustrate it with pictures of the editors of a rival yellow paper."

The following letter in rhyme from Charles Battell Loomis to Henry Wallace Phillips will interest all those who like to hear about authors and their doings:

Fanwood, the second month, the second day.

Dear Phillips:
Bear with me a while, I pray.
Long have I read and now the page grows stale;
Walking is barred for loudly roars the gale;
Talking is also off for down below
The good wife reads the children tales by Poe:
I do not smoke, to drink I am ashamed—
Why then if that I write must I be blamed?
How goes it with yourself and wife and child?
Have you these roaring winds or is it mild
Upon that island home wherein you dwell?
I'll wage not. The blasts must blow like hell
But blasts that blow in hell are always hot;
And those in Richmond, I'll be bound, are not.
How wags the world and how doth wag the pen?
Like you the habits and the ways of men
Whose strenuous days and roaring nights are passed
In boom towns hot and rolling prairies vast?
And do the shekels beat against thy door,
Shiver thy panes and roll about the floor?
Quite lately I took train to Boston town
And saw the man who runs the book called Brown.
I found he was a man both good and true
And many things he said to me of you.
That social tale he published yester year
Brought comments in his mail from far and near
One said (of his remarks this is the gist)
"The west he writes of never did exist."
One wrote, "I read his tale with fervid zest,
"It's easy seen he sure does know the west."
And I, dear boy, who've heard you talk, forsooth
Know of the twain the latter spoke the truth.
Last week I lunched with Jenks and Rupert Hughes
And both men said some pleasant things of youse
Though Rupert's spent some moons in Albion's Isle
His accent has not changed a bit the while,
He apes not Englishmen because the man
Is first and last true blue Amercan.
What do you think doth now engage my pen?
Short sketches of the lives of famous men,
For use in schools the book will be when done
And when complete I'll win a lot of mon.
Of Gilbert Stuart I've already writ
And kindly friends declare I've made a hit.
The joke is this: it is not in my line
And at the start I thought I must decline.
But "reading up" within the Astor pile
Is in itself distinctly worth the while
And then the shaping of the tales I find
Is work distinctly pleasant to my mind;
So that you see for me had been a loss
If I had said "This bridge I cannot cross."
We all are well and hope that you're the same
And send regards to you and kid and dame.
Write to me soon; I like your letters well.
No more just now.

Sincerely yours,
—BETTELL.

P. S. As one who makes not rhymes his craft
I feel quite proud. This is my only draught.